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F. RABORN JR., 84; LED DEVELOPMENT OF POLARIS MISSILE
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 By MICHAEL WINES
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WASHINGTON _ William F. Raborn Jr., a retired Navy vice admiral who led development of the Polaris nuclear missile in the 1950s and later headed the Central Intelligence Agency under President Lyndon B. Johnson, died of cardiac arrest on March 7 at his home in McLean, Va. He was 84.

Raborn was the first director of the Navy's Fleet Ballistic Missile Program, which oversaw development and production of the world's first submarine-launched nuclear missile, the Polaris.

The weapon was hailed at the time as an American triumph in the cold war arms race and as a boon to the country's allies, whose acceptance of American nuclear missiles on their soil was a constant source of friction with the Soviet Union.

More important, the Polaris proved the harbinger of a series of submarine-launched missiles that changed the nature of the American nuclear deterrent.

Today, more than half the nation's nuclear warheads are carried on missiles and torpedoes in submarines, largely because the boats are mobile and extremely difficult to detect.

Raborn was widely praised for completing development of the missile well ahead of schedule by holding his staff strictly accountable for each stage in the weapon's progress.

Among colleagues, he was regarded as both a skilled seaman and a manager, a man who kept on his office walls not just pictures of great naval officers, but also of organizers in science and industry.

He was also a picture-book military man who, it is reported, rushed out of retirement in 1965 after Johnson asked him to succeed John A. McCone as director of central intelligence.

In his landmark book on the CIA, "The Agency," John Raneleagh quoted a former Raborn colleague who described the admiral's reaction when sworn in as director: "After the president had said some kind things about him, about how he'd searched the country over and the only man he could find really capable of running it was 'Red' Raborn, there he was with tears trickling down his cheeks and coming off his chin in steady little drops. They really were."

Raborn was director of central intelligence from April 1965 to June 1966, when he was succeeded by his deputy, Richard M. Helms.

His tenure is widely described as a difficult one. His predecessor, McCone, had been dismissed in part because he openly disagreed with the president on intelligence issues involving the expanding war in Vietnam. Raborn, trained in the military hierarchy, worked to satisfy Johnson's demands that the agency

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provide more intelligence and run clandestine operations in the war. William Francis Raborn Jr. was born on June 8, 1905, in Decatur, Texas.

He graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1928, and

was commissioned an ensign. After World War II service in Washington and at sea, he became a captain in 1945, and, in 1952, was made an official in the guided missile division of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.

In 1954, he became commander of the Bennington, where his Navy career took an abrupt and, it first seemed, unfortunate turn. In May 1954, an explosion and fire below decks killed 91 of the Bennington's crew outright and injured at least 20 others. Although Raborn was praised for his handling of the disaster, he was assigned to a program that ranked near the bottom of the Navy's priorities: developing an intercontinental nuclear missile for submarines.

He took charge of the Polaris project on Jan. 1, 1956 and, now a rear admiral, rode merciless herd on its manufacturers and planners. On July 20, 1960, off Cape Canaveral, the first Polaris was launched from a submerged submarine, the George Washington.

The missile landed on target 1,150 miles away.

Raborn retired from the Navy in 1963 and moved to California, where he served as a vice president of the Aerojet-General Corp. He returned to the company for three years after his departure from the CIA.

From 1970 to 1986, he managed his own concern, the W.F. Raborn Co. Inc., in McLean.

Raborn received the Distinguished Service Medal and the Presidential National Security Medal during his years in the Navy and at the CIA.

He is survived by his wife, Mildred T. Raborn; a son, William F. Raborn III, and a daughter, Priscilla Richardson, both of California; three brothers, B.M. Raborn, C.B. Raborn, and R.C. Raborn, all of Texas; and four grandchildren.

He was buried in the United States Naval Academy Cemetery in Annapolis, Md.

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